EDITORIAL
NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND, USA - THE EDITORIAL STAFF

Two new products have made their way onto the QL scene, the long awaited TEXT87 PLUS4 wordprocessor (see News Release in this issue). It is a major rewrite of their TEXT 87, and we look forward to reviewing it. Jurgen Falkenberg has released his "Hard Disk Interface" (Gold Card version due this spring). This interface is both MFM and RLL compatible, supporting a wide choice of Hard Drives.

There are two articles in this issue that are not QL specific, but relevant to a large number of IQLR readers. The first deals with a 32K buffer chip for Panasonic printers. The second deals with PC Pursuit, an online communications service.

TOOLKIT II enthusiasts will notice the absence of our "TOOLKIT II TUTORIAL", unfortunately PART 4 had not arrived by press time.

We've been hard at work these last few months, completely rewriting and expanding the "QL SURVIVOR'S SOURCE BOOK" (see article in this issue), and working on the "INTERNATIONAL COMPUTER GLOSSARY", which we hope will be finished by the time you read this.

In response to requests from readers, we are offering bound volumes of IQLR. Volume #1 (issues 1-6) will be spiral bound with plastic laminated covers. We will also provide the covers separately, for those of you who have kept your back issues. Contact IQLR for more information.

Our next issue will complete our first year of publication, and thanks to you, our second year promises to be just as exciting.

When we started IQLR, our aim was to disseminate information and reestablish communications between widely separated QL users. Some have said that we priced the subscription rate too low. We never intended to make a profit, but did expect to cover our costs. We based the subscription rate on a 12 page quarterly newsletter. As it turned out, each issue expanded in size and we published bi-monthly. With the increased size, the postage costs doubled and we decided to mail in an envelope to prevent your newsletters from arriving dogeared. To compound this, our paper and printing costs have spiraled upwards. In order to meet the increased cost, and still provide a quality newsletter, it's necessary to increase subscription rates to $14.95 per year for the USA, $16.95 per year for Canada, and $28.00 for the rest of the world (US funds). We sincerely hope this increase does not adversely affect any of you.

Subscription renewal at the above rates will be in effect starting with Volume 2, Issue #1. We urge readers to encourage their QL friends to subscribe to IQLR, the more subscribers we have, the better able we'll be, to take advantage of price breaks, that can help us keep our rates low. As an incentive for early renewal, we are offering a $2.00 discount off the new subscription rates, if your renewal is received before March 1, 1992.

MEGA DISK DRIVES & THE GOLD CARD

Recently we've discovered that when married to the Gold Card, not all 3.2 meg disk drives are created equal. After further research, numerous calls to Miracle Systems, and the expenditure of $160.00, we are convinced that the 3.2 meg disk drives listed in issue #3 of IQLR are not FULLY compatible with the Gold Card.

While these drives "will" read 720K disks, you cannot successfully write to them. When this is attempted, all information on the disk is lost. When formatting any size disk, they attempt to format to the 3.2 meg (6400 sectors) capacity of the drive.

Miracle was not aware that Teac was selling two versions of their 3.2 meg disk drives, one that was created especially for the IBM, and the second created for all other users. Of course, the drive that was most readily available in North America was the IBM version.

The disk drive that "does" work with the Gold Card is the TEAC FD235J "3653". The second set of numbers is the key, the number of the drive that is not compatible is the 653.

The correct drive can be purchased from: J.D. Hannam Co. for $95.00 each. Their telephone number in the U.S.A. is: 800-228-0308. Remember to specify **FD235J 3653**.

3RD ANNUAL ITALIAN QL FAIR
BERBENNO, ITALY - DR. EROS FORENZI

QITALY CLUB in conjunction with SPEM of Italy will host the 3rd Italian QL User Fair on Sunday the 12th of January 1992, at Via Ponchielli 26/A, Turin, Italy. For additional information concerning accommodations and on-site assistance (English and Italian spoken), please call in Italy:

> Dr. Eros Forenzi
> 39 39 484686   (Work number MON-FRI)
> 39 342 492323   (Home number weekends only)

We expect most major European dealers, in addition to the usual QL offerings (seminars, news, bug-hunting, software, hardware, etc., etc.). We hope to see you at the fair.

32K BUFFER CHIP/PANASONIC PRINTERS

In a recent issue of the LISTing Newsletter (LIST User Group publication) there was an interesting offer for a 32K buffer chip for $12.50 plus $1.00 shipping each. Panasonic

charges over $50.00 for a similar chip. One of the major advantages of increasing the size of your printer buffer is to allow you to download additional fonts for use by the printer. Bob Gilder of the LIST Group has installed one of these chips and is very pleased with its performance.

The 32K buffer chip is compatible with the 1092I, 1123,1124, 1124I, 1180, 1191, 1524, 1624, 1654, and 1695 model printers. Send your check or money order to:

> R.J. Kulman
> 2769 East 65th Street
> Brooklyn, NY 11234
> USA

NEWS RELEASE - TEXT87 PLUS4
LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM - SOFTWARE 87

(Please note that this is a news release from the vender and not a review - we have not yet reviewed this product - Ed.) . We are glad to announce the release of TEXT87 PLUS4. As you will see in the accompanying information, the new PLUS4 offers many advantages over previous versions of TEXT87.

TEXT87 PLUS4 is finally out of wraps. Based on the proven technology introduced in the previous releases of text87, the new PLUS4 is a complete rewrite in object orientated ANSI C and 68000 assembly language using state of-the-art development tools and cross-compilers not available for the QL. These tools have enabled us to surpass the specifications of version 3.00 by leaps and bounds, while maintaining program speed and size. There are many new features and commands, but above all we have taken great care to make the program a joy to use for simple editing tasks and for publications with complex layouts.

FOR THE BEGINNER there is a mode with short menus that hide the more advanced features of the program, and there is more compatibility with commands and key-presses used in Quill. The HELP system can also be put on constant display.

FOR THE ADVANCED USER, up to 4 documents can be open simultaneously, with up to 2 windows over each document so that you can edit the text while looking at a different part of it. Windows can be arranged and resized manually or automatically and switched quickly. Constant display of page and column ends on the screen with all the changes of line-spacing accounted for, page preview shows full A4 (slightly larger than US 8 1/2" x 11") pages on the screen before you commit the text to paper.

It has flexible page layout with up to 12 frames of text on each page, and distance between columns of text can be varied, columns with unequal widths and heights can be set up as well. Up to 64 different page layouts can be set up for each document with support for automatic layout change between even and odd pages. Layouts are saved and loaded with the document, and there is an enhanced layout editor with live display of sizes and larger increments for faster moving and resizing frames. The new export command saves the highlighted block as a complete formatted document ready to merge into another text.

FOR EVERYONE, we have an enhanced menu system with more context-sensitive prompts and information on display, there's fast escape from any menu to the editing

window, and very fast search and replace, both backwards and forward, case dependent, and independent.

New selector boxes allow much faster choosing of typefaces, screen founts, etc. An enhanced spell checker features selector boxes for browsing the dictionary, and automatic replacement of the selected word which is now automatically capitalized, if the original began with a capital. There is an additional large English dictionary.

We have an overwrite mode in addition to the default insert mode for editing, and paragraph indents in addition to outdents can be set up on rulers, the ruler for the current paragraph can be changed with one command. After editing rulers, parts of the text affected are reformatted automatically, no need to issue the reformat command. A horizontal scale is displayed with the ruler, and the ruler is panned when panning horizontally over wide text.

There's a choice of menu position at the bottom or top, a la Quill, and more logical cursor moves. Move by word puts the cursor on the first character of the next/last word, move by paragraph puts it at the start of a paragraph, move up and down by several lines retains the original horizontal position if possible, and there's new commands for moving up and down by one screen or frame.

The inclusion of more flexible erase operations, allow erasing through line ends when erasing backward or forward. Block marking is easier, simply move the cursor to the first or last character while holding down an extra key.

TEXT87 PLUS4 is supplied on two disks with a comprehensive new manual. The cost of our latest offering is 79 POUNDS STERLING. We offer the following upgrade path for those of you who already own a version of TEXT87.

| Version 3.xx or later | 39 POUNDS STERLING |
| Earlier or Budget versions | 49 POUNDS STERLING |

When upgrading, be sure to send us the original TEXT87 disk, the cover from the manual, and the cover from the manual supplement (if you have one), as these items are your proof of purchase. Please send your order to:

SOFTWARE 87
33 Savernake Road
London NW3 2JU
United Kingdom

WHAT USE IS THE QL IN EDUCATION
CARRBORO, NORTH CAROLINA, USA - DOUG DEWEY

For over a year now I have had three QLs set up in my classroom at Chapel Hill High School where I teach introductory Spanish and am the speech and debate team coach. The QLs are expanded to at least 640K of RAM, have three and a half inch disk drives, and RGB monitors (2 QL monitors and a SANYO DMC 6113). I have gradually assembled these systems as friends and acquaintances have gotten rid of their orphan computers and gone on to Big Blue. I use the computers for wordprocessing chores that are the mainstay of a teacher's life and times, as well as doing grades and writing grade reports. In addition, I use them for instruction with two programs; REVISOR and DBTUTOR.

In terms of value for money, the QLs have been superb in all areas. In terms of the irritation factor of a machine crashing now and again, I would rate the QL as only a C+. Some machines are more resistant to crashing than others. Some machines allow more handling by students without a severe and violent reaction on the part of the machine. Some students handle computers more harshly, too. The more computers are used during classtime, the more they tend to hang up or crash during that classtime. They follow Murphy's Law (or Laws) as strictly as any other entity.

Students tend to handle the whole unit. If two students are working on one machine --a way to maximize its use and multiply the instruction it can provide--they tend to pass the QL back and forth as they take turns on the keyboard. Don't forget that with the QL the keyboard is part of the main unit and that extra memory and drive interface are not rigidly connected. With movement, things tend to flex, and flex tends to crash. Coupled with the natural tendencies of some QLs to crash, I have found more problems with some stations than others. I now have enough QLs that I can switch one machine in for another if it seems to be following its natural tendencies. I have them proped up on their little feet. I used to use three feet per machine but two is fine. I attach them with super strong velcro squares (from Radio Shack) which I cut to fit the recessed area of the foot and punch a large hole for a screw. I put each foot over a screw such that I can get the screw out through the velcro. As most of you are aware, this is a necessity as QLs are generally (constantly) in need of the attention of the tinker in us. Otherwise what would we have gotten them for, eh?

The nice thing about the QL is that it can be tinkered. A new keyboard matrix, a different 8301, a new 8049--maybe even a new 68008--and you're off again. It's amazing how time flies when you're having fun. Every time a QL crashes I wonder whether or not I'm having fun. I must say, however, that they are not so bad as to be useless. But rather, they are just bad enough to be irritating at times. They are like some of my students: Sam and Jeremy and George, to name a few. I find myself constantly tinkering with them as well.

The gradebook program I use for is called "The Master Teacher" by Mel MacKaron. It is a good program with lots of features, and I have modified it so that it works well with QLOAD on the various machines. The program used to be specific to the JSU ROM--something to do with the windows and the WHEN ERROR instruction, I believe. It was available for the *Timex Sinclair* 2068 and is available for the IBM as well. One feature it lacks on the QL is the ability to automatically update the student list to the next student when a set of grades is entered for, let's say, a single quiz or test. The program does allow for quick and easy entry of a number of grades for individual students. Mel MacKaron tells me that when he wrote the IBM version of "The Master Teacher" he included the automatic update feature of entering grades.

The two instructional programs I use are REVISOR and DBTUTOR. I must say that I like DBTUTOR the best as it encourages questions where the correct answer must be typed in and then checks that answer to see if it is "ok" or "x" (needs changing). Both programs have a flashcard feature allowing the user to simply review a lot of material quickly in flashcard style. Both can randomly present material, print out questions with/without answers allowing for the teacher or student to generate a variety of simple test or quiz items. REVISOR is more flashy with a number of screen colors, but it is all multiple choice in its format. It has an interesting feature allowing the presentation of a block of text which can be adjusted so as to blank out or reveal just portions of the text at the user's command. One other advantage of REVISOR is the ability to link modules of material together so that

additional question and answer units can be loaded in, but only in a fixed order. I wish that REVISOR had a feature whereby answers could be typed in as that's what I need for teaching Spanish.

DBTUTOR fills the need very well in terms of its ability to check answers against a preprogrammed "correct" answer. There is however no facility for any error analysis or branching which could lead to different explanations that are instructional in nature. No real feedback options are given. It keeps score nicely of how the learner is doing and it can be adjusted to a variety of presentations, timing patterns, etc. When you load in the program it is a bit of a fiddle to get to the point where anything of value is happening. You can enter a succession of keystrokes that get you from one menu to another so that, in time, you are ready to begin a drill, but I would rather have it be more automatic. DBTUTOR, like most things for the QL, requires tinkering.

The big surprise for me last year was how useful I found these programs with all sorts of learners. They seemed to benefit from their practice and at times did better on written quizzes. At the end of the year I used them to help to review a lot of material with students. But the programs also required a good deal of time to input question-answer strings. So far this year I have not been using the programs as much as I did at the end of last year. The major problem that I have to deal with is that I'm the only teacher with QLs. The limitations were obvious to me this past summer when I took a special course on an instructional system called CALIS at Duke University. CALIS is an IBM program developed at Duke to aid in language learning. I'm afraid I must say that it is head and shoulders above either REVISOR and DBTUTOR in terms of its branching and error analysis and feedback. CALIS also runs in a plain vanilla format on older machines as well as a fancy format under Windows 3.0 on newer, faster IBM machines. It can use video clips with sound and laser/CDs allowing for a wider use of technology than the QL, which is intellectually about 10 years old now. I plan, however, to work on the QL programs this winter break as well as do some work on CALIS. Both machines and all three programs have their uses. All take a lot of time and work on the part of the teacher. You can scan text into CALIS but it is then necessary to set right and wrong answers and branches, and that takes TIME.

EXEQTOR LIMITED EDITION
DINSLAKEN, GERMANY - MARTIN FLORICHS

Some time ago I wrote you concerning our projected 'SuperQL', and discussed the possibility of offering it in kit form (see IQLR issue #3, page 13).

COWO Electronic of Switzerland, and we at QLYMPIC Computer Systems here in Germany, are proud to announce to your readers, that we are NOW building the 'SuperQL', which we have named the "EXEQTOR LIMITED EDITION". Delivery to North America will take about six weeks after receipt of an order. A decision on a kit version will be made in the near future.

Anyone interested in this machine should contact COWO Electronic as they are handling sales and delivery outside Europe. Their address is:

> COWO ELECTRONIC
> Munsterstrasse 4
> CH-6210 Sursee
> Switzerland   Tel: 045 211 478

The base model specifications for the EXEQTOR are; Sinclair QL Motherboard, tower case with 200 watt power supply, Miracle Gold Card, 720K 3.5" disk drive (additional drives and sizes optional), JFC Keyboard-90 Interface and 101 key keyboard, QIMI Mouse Interface with two button mouse, JS ROM's (Minerva optional), and QTOP user front end software.

We are also offering a 40 Meg Hard Disk and twin Microdrive units as additional options. The base model price is 2290 Swiss Francs. Thank you again for your interest, and please extend our best regards to your readers.

QL SURVIVOR'S SOURCE BOOK
NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND, USA - SEACOAST SERVICES

We are happy to announce the release of the second edition of the "QL SURVIVOR'S SOURCE BOOK" (QLSSB). It's been completely rewritten and expanded with the addition of three new categories.

The front and back cover have been redesigned to reflect changes in the QL world, as has the bulk of the text. Two versions of the QLSSB are now available. The first, has laminated covers that withstand coffee spills, hard use, etc. The cost for this version is $12.95 plus $3.00 s & h. The second has standard card stock covers. The cost for this version is $7.95 plus $3.00 S & h. Both versions contain the exact same information, are spiral bound, and available from IQLR.

The seven categories/sections are as follows:

QL BOOKS: this section contains a listing of every book published to date, that we know of. We list the title, author, country of origin, and ISBN number.

QL BULLITIN BOARDS: this section lists the major international bulletin boards that are either QL specific, or contain QL interest sections.

QL HARDWARE SUPPLIERS: this section lists the known hardware manufacturers, dealers, spare parts, repair specialists, and suppliers of new and/or used equipment world-wide. We include the name, address, telephone number, and give examples of their wares.

QL PERIODICALS: this section lists all the major periodicals that cover the QL or its clones.

QL PUBLIC DOMAIN & SHAREWARE SUPPLIERS: this section lists suppliers who can supply you with the great wealth of pd and shareware software.

QL SOFTWARE SUPPLIERS: this section lists companies and individuals who offer commercial software world-wide. This is the largest section with over 60 different listings from more than eleven countries. As is always the case, we list name, address, telephone number, and give examples of their wares.

QL USER GROUPS: in this section we list the known QL specific user groups world-wide. Any group that supports the QL or its clones should be listed in this section.

The QLSSB 2nd edition is available and shipping now. Contact IQLR for more information or to place an order.

WHY MINERVA ???
NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND, USA - BOB DYL

This question is asked over and over again. The simple answer would be in the form of another question. DO YOU WANT AN ENHANCED QL OPERATING SYSTEM??? If you answered in the affirmative, but require more, then read on.

The Minerva ROM is available in two versions, the standard model is designated the MK I, and the expanded model the MK II. We'll begin by listing the enhancements that are common to both.

Both are easy to install with no soldering required. Just open the computer and remove the two ROM chips. Plug in the new PCB that comes with the MINERVA into the left hand ROM socket and replace the QL cover. This still leaves the external ROM port available.

Immediately noticeable are the considerable speed increases in bootup, RAM test, multi-tasked programs, BASIC program search, TRAP entry, floating point arithmetic, string manipulation and graphics display. In addition to the overall speed increases you can run concurrently, multiple SuperBasic interpreters, perform WARM resets from the keyboard, access a second screen via the extended mode, utilize an extended character set including Greek and control characters or use upside down scaling.

In addition to all this, you have an interactive SuperBASIC syntax checker that places the cursor on the error point until you correct it. There are many more enhancements than we have room for in this article, but to me the bottom line was, my QL runs faster and cooler with Minerva installed.

The Minerva MK II has all the above features plus, a battery backed RAM (keyboard programmable) and crashproof real time clock. It features an I2C bus that drives the on-board clock/ram chip, and can be used to drive robots, analog and digital I/O chips to telephone dialers, LCD drivers, teletext chips, and voice synthesizers.

Which do you buy, MK I or MK II ??? Only you know which would best suit your needs. As I write this article in early December, the MK II is not yet compatible with the Gold Card. Qview and T.F. Services are working hard to correct this problem, and by the time you read this, I anticipate that compatibility will have been accomplished. *(On 17 December 1991 I received an updated MINERVA MK II, version 1.92, as well as the latest Gold Card ROM chip version 2.26. I'm pleased to report the MK II is now compatable with the Gold Card and they both work fine).*

In any case, the MK I is compatible with the Gold Card and all other QL configurations (that I am aware of). Both offer excellent value for money, and the distributor, T.F. Services has one of the best reputations in the QL world.

We are negotiating with T.F. Services for the purpose of setting up an IQLR organized group buy, for the MINERVA ROM. For more information, call me at : 401-849-3805, or write to IQLR.

PC PURSUIT

In the article "ONLINE WITH THE QL" by Ron Blizzard in issue #4, Ron mentioned PC PURSUIT, an online service that let's you call BBS's in all major cities in the evenings for a flat monthly fee.

PC PURSUIT is a service of US SPRINT, their regular membership fee is $30.00 per month. That includes up to 30 hours of non-prime time usage. During prime time the usage fee is $10.50 per hour.

Prime time hours are from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm (your local time) Monday through Friday.

Non-prime time hours are from 6:00 pm to 7:00 am (your local time) Monday through Thursday; 6:00 pm Friday through 7:00 am Monday (local).

For additional information, or to join PC PURSUIT, call them at: 800-736-1130.

SBYTES AND THE GOLD CARD
NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND, USA - BOB DYL

A number of years ago, it was determined, that heat buildup could be reduced in the QL by replacing the ROM's with an EPROM. EPROMs run cooler than ROMs and one EPROM can replace both of the original ROM chips.

The SBYTES command allows the code on the ROM to be copied to disk or microdrive without the necessity of removing the ROM chips. This code could then be used by an EPROM Programmer (burner) to duplicate the ROM on an EPROM. Over the years, this has been the tried and true method.

The installation of a Gold Card changes this. With its 68000 processor, and two megs of memory it handles the ROMs differently. Upon booting up the QL, the Gold Card reads the code for the operating system from the ROM(s) into it's memory creating a "MIRROR IMAGE" of the ROM, which is then used by the processor instead of the original, resulting in much faster response times.

What's the problem ??? Sounds good so far. True, you can still use SBYTES, and it will copy the code to disk or microdrive cartridge, and the EPROM Programmer will burn the code onto a chip the same as before. But when you install and attempt to run your new EPROM, you quickly realize it doesn't work correctly.

We ran dozens of tests using two different EPROM PROGRAMERS, and a new EPROM each time. All failed to run. We've determined the problem is with the "MIRROR IMAGE". When SBYTES is done on a non Gold Card QL everything is fine and the code is dumped from the ROM chip. But when the SBYTES command is used on a QL with the Gold Card installed, you're actually dumping the code from the "MIRROR IMAGE" instead of the original ROM(s). Examination of the code exposed differences between the original code and the supposedly Mirror Image. Whether these differences occur in order to accommodate the 68000 processor or because the code becomes altered while running we

were not able to ascertain. However, a comparison of the code from a standard QL and from one with a Gold Card installed indicated 51 differences between the two files.

This leaves us with two possibilities, either you remove the ROM's for burning, or you use SBYTES on a QL without a Gold Card, both methods work fine. For those of you without an EPROM Programmer, the company listed below, can perform this service for you, and supply the EPROM PCB as well.

MECHANICAL AFFINITY
513 East Main Street
Peru, IN 46970
USA   Tel: 317-473-8031

CORRECTION

In the last issue of IQLR (#4) there was a typographical error in the Assembly Language listing in Will Horton's article on "LINKING ASSEMBLER INTO C PROGRAMS". Approximately two thirds of the way down the listing is the following line;

     AGAIN   MOVE.B   ( )(A6,A1.L),(A4)+   load name onto pointer

The correct line should have read;

     AGAIN   MOVE.B   0(A6,A1.L),(A4)+   load name onto pointer

We regret any inconvenience this may have caused.

DATADESIGN : REVIEW OF A NEW DATABASE
CORNISH, NEW HAMPSHIRE, USA - BILL CABLE

I am a big fan of PSION's ARCHIVE Database and a promoter of the use of databases in general. Bob Dyl recently loaned me a copy of DATAdesign by PROGS (PROfessional and Grafical Software - programmers Joachim & Nathan Van der Auwera) of Belgium to review. To my knowledge, the QL only had ARCHIVE and FLASHBACK as general purpose database systems so the release of DATAdesign is a significant event for QL users. I have no direct experience with FLASHBACK so my vantage point is that of a heavy duty ARCHIVE user.

DATAdesign is a fast, user friendly database system, with multiple line fields and the ability to add and delete fields at any time. A "state of the art" user interface is provided by the pointer environment of Qjump and menu extensions of Jochen Merz. The pointer system is designed for a mouse or arrow/enter keys. In order to allow for user flexibility in handling the data, a toolkit is included so the user can create, read, and manipulate DATAdesign files in SuperBASIC or assembler. This allows for powerful programming flexibility for those wanting to do special work. It comes on one disk with a 124 page manual. The software includes the extensions, the main program, a configuration program to set colors and print device, some demo databases, an example SuperBASIC program, and a program to convert ARCHIVE export files to DATAdesign files. There is no doubt

that this package represents a major programming effort and provides some unique features not found in any other QL program.

DATAdesign boots up quickly even though hotkey extensions, pointer extensions, menu extensions, and the DATAdesign engine must be loaded into memory first. These extensions must be installed before any other task is started so users might want to incorporate them into their basic boot up routine. The main-window appears with menu choice icons in the upper part of the screen. A choice can be made by mouse, arrow/enter keys *(also a joystick - Ed)* or by using <CTRL> key sequences for specific commands as listed in the manual. I have no mouse but found the arrow/enter keys easy to use. As I became familiar with the <CTRL> key commands I preferred that method since it required the least effort. The large lower part of the screen is used to hold field names and values. By in large, I found most commands intuitive and easy to use but some didn't work as I expected and I had to read portions of the manual carefully before I felt comfortable with them. There are several sample databases that can be loaded to play with. One can switch to SuperBASIC and back at any time with <CTRL> <C>.

Nice Features:
The manual has a good table of contents and index. Most puzzling terms can be quickly looked up. The English is good and the style clear. There is a registration card provided and user support is promised.

This is a fast program. Databases load fast and save fast. Searches, sorting (ordering), filtering (selecting) are all fast. Screens update quickly as when browsing through records. The entire database is kept in memory so no disk accesses are required while working with a database.

Creating a database and adding or removing a field is easy. Multiple lines can be added to any field so data having long segments of text can be easily handled.

The program is easy on memory so many copies of DATAdesign can be multitasked at the same time simply by repeated EXEC DATAdesign. Switching between them and SuperBASIC is done by using <CTRL><C>. The basic screen can be resized and moved or put to sleep. The screens are saved when switching between tasks so it is always clear what is going on.

Print layout is handled by a simple printing language and can be saved in a file for future use, Each print layout is made up of a series of characters telling what to print and where is called a form-string. Laying out an address label or a product ID label would be easy to do.

There is a viewing command that allows one to see one particular field for nine records at once and one can scroll through records quickly, nine at a time. The field being viewed can be easily changed.

Searching, filtering, printing, viewing , and sorting have popup menus that work in a similar manner. I found them a little awkward but effective once I learned the parameters.

There is a "mark" flag that can be switched on or off for each record and filtering can work off of it.

Criticisms:

There is minimal documentation given about the Qjump extensions installed. The user is advised to refer to the Qjump manual. Unless this manual is supplied with DATAdesign I think is a serious omission. I am not familiar with these extensions and would like to know more about what they are and the changes they make to my working environment. I know that the <ALT><ENTER> that I am used to using to retype my last line is disabled. There are probably many useful features too, but I don't know what they are.

There is no way to convert from DATAdesign to ARCHIVE export format without the user doing some SuperBASIC programming using the DATAdesign extensions. There are a few complications here because DATAdesign supports longer text fields than ARCHIVE does. Still ARCHIVE is the standard for database work on the QL and for the user not to be able to easily give database information to others who use ARCHIVE is a serious omission. The conversion program supplied to convert ARCHIVE export files into DATAdesign files works very slowly and no status information is displayed while it is running. I converted a 400 record ARCHIVE address database to DATAdesign format and it took more than a hour. To export it to or from ARCHIVE only takes several minutes.

When a database is first accessed the last record which is always empty is displayed so one sees fields with no values. I found this confusing at first and irritating later on even though a simple key press would move me to a real record. Many times when a database is accessed there is no intention of adding records. To continually end up at this empty record was distracting.

The basic screen layout is not flexible. You can only see the fields one after the other down the screen. The fields have to appear in the order of their creation. Just as important as being able to add or remove a field is to be able to change its location because we often find that we only need to enter or change certain fields most of the time. Having to move past extraneous ones all the time wastes time. An address is much more appealing if it is laid out more like an address label rather than in a linear fashion. It would be nice if the form-string used for printing could also apply to the screen so custom designed screens could be made without resorting to the SuperBASIC extensions.

Although each SuperBASIC function is described by form, action, and parameters, it would be helpful to have an example use of each one as part of the description. I have seen this done in a description of C routines and it is very effective. Just a short description of the context of its use and a few lines of actual code are all that is needed. This could save users a lot of extra effort.

DATAdesign and ARCHIVE comparisons:

DATAdesign loads the complete database into memory like a wordprocessor and you have to specifically save any changes although you are reminded of this by the program when you try to quit or load another database. ARCHIVE only reads data into memory as it needs it. It has the nasty quirk of corrupting opened databases not closed properly. Either system can lose data if sensible precautions are not followed. Loading all data into memory makes things work faster but for large databases it might become unworkable. I use ARCHIVE programs that have almost a disk full of data files accessed at the same time. Keeping all that in memory can tax a system, but that is an extreme example.

Sorting in DATAdesign works on up to two fields to any depth (I think), and in ARCHIVE it works on up to four fields to a depth of eight characters for each field. In some

applications I have to use sorts on three fields although most users may not have such needs. The eight character depth limitation of ARCHIVE sometimes causes problems.

In ARCHIVE you have to program or use full word commands to do much of anything. You can buy third party front ends for specific applications. DATAdesign has a very nice user interface build in. I imagine third party applications will become available for DATAdesign also.

DATAdesign allows for programming custom work in SuperBASIC and ARCHIVE has its own language. I would much rather program database applications in ARCHIVE's language than in SuperBASIC even though SuperBASIC is a nice language. The ARCHIVE language is a sophisticated database language and has a nice built in editor and good error tracing. SuperBASIC is a general purpose language with only fair error tracing. The advantage of using DATAdesign would be program speed and better control of user interface. These could easily make up for other drawbacks and make DATAdesign the database of choice for for many people.

ARCHIVE can easily export data to other programs and even to PCs. DATAdesign is not quite so flexible with the user having to resort to SuperBASIC programming to export data. Both programs can easily "print" to a file to import to a word processor.

ARCHIVE is much superior in handling numbers. It keeps 14 significant digits. DATAdesign keeps numbers as text although you can sort numerically but can not do number manipulations on its own. If one used SuperBASIC to do numeric manipulations with DATAdesign databases then its seven significant figure limitation would mean that 10000.00 would be near the limit of usable accuracy without resorting to special techniques.

Conclusion:
For a general purpose text database out of the box, DATAdesign is the best system I know of for the QL. I am not a big GUI *(Graphic User Interface - Ed.)* fan, but it works and most will like its flashy style. To many people its speed alone makes it a must. For database application programmers it offers the possibility of making a more marketable product. The programming environment is powerful but not as nice as ARCHIVE. It should be considered by users at all levels of experience. Its price of around $70 is reasonable for the quality.

Sources for DATAdesign:

Jochen Mertz   PROGS
Im Stillen Winkel 12   Haachtstraat 92
W-4100 Duisburg 11   B-3020 Veltem
Germany   Tel: 0203 501 274   Belgium
                                                       Tel: 016 488952

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CST THOR SUPPORT

We recently received a flyer from COWO ELECTRONIC, in Sursee, Switzerland expressing their continued support of the THOR range of personnel computers. COWO

Electronic are the authors of THOR-DESK which was to have been incorporated into the Thor XVI system. Unfortunately Thor International filed for bankruptcy in the Spring of 1990 and the deal fell through. THOR-DESK is now being marketed by COWO Electronic as QTOP *(I have used Qtop, which will also run on the QL. It is an impressive frontend desktop application -Ed)*. Included in the flyer is a list of information they need in order to properly support your Thor (i.e. Model and specification, ARGOS version, PCB issue, etc.). Also included is a price list of Thor specific hardware and software they carry (some of which have information sheets that they will be happy to provide).

> COWO ELECTRONIC (Mr. Urs Konig)
> Munsterstrasse 4
> CH-6210 Sursee
> Switzerland   Tel: 045 21 14 78

IQLR will be happy to provide a copy of the flyer and product list if you send a SASE.

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IQLR is published by:

SeaCoast Services
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Newport, RI 02840
U.S.A.
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